

VZCZCXRO3343  
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHYD #0806 2671217  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 241217Z SEP 09  
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0290  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS YAOUNDE 000806

SIPDIS

Department for AF/C and OES  
Department Pass USAID and USDA  
USDOC for ITA - Burress

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [CD](#) [CM](#)  
SUBJECT: CAMEROON: Tree Planting to Save Lake Chad

REF: NDJAMENA 404

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Embassy Yaounde continued its environmental outreach with a recently signed agreement to fund reforestation projects around Lake Chad. An August 27 tree planting ceremony near Lake Chad, attended by Ambassador and Chadian and Cameroonian ministers, signaled strong cooperation between the two neighbors on a key climate change issue. Soon after the tree planting event, the Government of Cameroon began to present its position on climate change in preparation for the upcoming Copenhagen talks. End Summary

Johnny Appleseed Comes to Lake Chad  
-----

¶2. (U) On August 27, Embassy Yaounde signed an agreement with the non-governmental organization Organisme de Developpement, d'Etude, de formation et de Conseils (ODECO) for a \$98,000 environmental project in the Lake Chad region. ODECO will administer the grant under the USDA-funded Food for Progress Program and will use the funds to develop tree nurseries in partnership with local communities, provide wells to supply water for the nurseries, and carry out the reforestation of areas around Lake Chad. The project will complement the efforts of the Cameroonian Ministry of Forests and Wildlife to promote the planting of 90,000 trees in the North and Far North Regions. Ambassador joined Cameroonian Minister of Forests and Wildlife Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, the visiting Chadian Minister of Environment, and local political and traditional leaders for a colorful (although very rainy) planting ceremony near the Cameroonian-Chadian border.

¶3. (U) The two ministers and the Ambassador planted trees on both sides of the Cameroonian-Chadian border as a symbol of their commitment to Lake Chad. They also planted trees in a community close to Lake Chad and made plans for many other trees to be planted by traditional leaders and community members at a later date. National media coverage, both television, radio and print, was extensive, in spite of the great distance from Yaounde and difficult travel logistics.

Chad-Cameroon Environmental Cooperation  
-----

¶4. (U) During the Ambassador's meeting with the two ministers, they spoke of the need for continued trans-border cooperation on environmental issues and of the threats facing the Lake Chad region. The ministers also commented that although there is a lot of international aid coming into the Congo Basin Region, little is going toward the Lake Chad Region. The surface area covered by the waters of Lake Chad has dropped from 25,000 square kilometers in 1964 to less than 2,000 square kilometers in 2008, they noted. African countries are already developing an African perspective in advance of the Copenhagen Conference, and Africans hope that developed countries will increasingly assist developing countries on environmental issues, the ministers said. They agreed to coordinate more on issues important within the region.  
Preparing for Copenhagen: Give us Aid

-----  
¶5. (U) Soon after the tree planting event, the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature, which has the lead on Copenhagen preparations, called a meeting to discuss the GRC's position on Copenhagen. Cameroonian experts hope industrialized countries will finance projects that will reduce the effects of climate change in the fields of transportation, energy, and sustainable land conservation. They feel that these new projects should in no way substitute for already existing bilateral and multilateral assistance. Appropriate technological transfers from industrialized nations are also expected, as well as the implementation of carbon forest markets and the procedure for financing Clean Development Mechanism projects.

¶6. (U) COMMENT: The ministers hailed the tree planting for its unprecedented level of Cameroonian-Chadian coordination on a high profile environmental event. Both ministers placed great emphasis on the need for continued cooperation in the region. The Minister of Forestry is passionate about planting trees, which to date has been Cameroon's main contribution to combating climate change. The GRC's position on Copenhagen not surprisingly leans on calls for outside assistance; unfortunately it does not offer new ideas or initiatives that Cameroon can pursue on its own. END COMMENT.

GARVEY